

Stampede for the News At KPFA in Berkeley

By Patrick Murphy

Berkeley's new city manager, John Taylor was all set to meet the press at the City Hall at 2100 Grove street at 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

Suddenly, the press bolted out the door.

Four minutes earlier the word had been flashed to the press room at the Berkeley Police Department that radio station KPFA had received a communication from the Symbionese Liberation Army about the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst.

A television network reporter had been told there that Patricia's father, publisher Randolph A. Hearst, had told newsmen at his Hillsborough home that KPFA had just received a letter from the SLA.

The police department press room emptied within seconds for the three-block sprint to the radio station at Allston way and Shattuck avenue.

Sixty-three reporters and cameramen gathered outside KPFA. They waited until about 10 a.m., when the station's news director, Paul Fischer, let them in.

The contingent went up a narrow stairway to the second floor and crowded into a 12-by-12 foot studio to listen to the reading of the SLA's long statement, and a cassette containing a tape recording of Miss Hearst's voice.

When a tape recording of her voice was heard, a forest of microphones reached up to a speaker high on the wall in a corner of the studio.

There was a silent tension, broken only once, when



PAUL FISCHER, KPFA NEWS DIRECTOR
He read the SLA communication

"Field Marshall Chin" pronounced "coup" as "coop".

Then there were a few snickers.

But generally there was only quiet activity, and the sounds were those of cameras whirring, and Fischer's voice.

After about 50 minutes in the hot, crowded room, the message ended.

About half the reporters left hurriedly, hunting for telephones.

The others waited for the station to make a sufficient number of Xerox copies of the SLA's statement, and for the making of three copies of the tape recording.

The three copies were given to ABC, NBC and CBS. The networks later made their own copies for their affiliate stations, both radio and TV. The station also made other copies for the rest of the media.